

***Carex flava* L.**
yellow sedge
Cyperaceae (Sedge Family)

Status: State Sensitive
Rank: G5S3

General Description: Adapted from Hitchcock et al. (1969): Stems 4 to 32 inches tall, clustered, not at all rhizomatous, phyllopodic. Leaves basal and cauline, flat, mostly $\frac{1}{16}$ to $\frac{1}{4}$ inch wide, the basal sheaths pale at the base. Terminal spike slender, wholly staminate or with some distal perigynia, $\frac{1}{4}$ to 1 inch long. Lateral spikes pistillate, 2-5, short and stout, $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{2}{3}$ inch long all sessile or short-pedunculate and crowded close to each other and to the staminate spike, or one or more of the lower ones more or less remote and more evidently pedunculate. One or more bracts with conspicuous, elongate, spreading blade much surpassing the inflorescence, the bracts subtending the spikes in the terminal cluster sheathless or nearly so, those subtending the more remote spikes (when these are present) with a more or less well-developed sheath as well as a long blade. Perigynia mostly $\frac{1}{8}$ to $\frac{1}{4}$ inch long, most of them spreading and evidently falcate-recurved, relatively slender and tapering gradually to the poorly defined beak, which is $\frac{1}{16}$ inch long, the perigynium strongly yellowish toward the base, usually more greenish (or eventually brownish) distally, prominently several-nerved on the upper surface, more obscurely so on the lower. Stigmas 3. Achenes $\frac{1}{16}$ inch long, a larger part of the perigynium thus empty.

Identification Tips: Diagnostic characteristics include glabrous perigynia, lower pistillate scales that are not at all leaf-like, the bracts subtending the spikes are all sheathless, leaf surfaces are glabrous, and the stems are clustered, not rhizomatous. *C. flava* is very similar to *Carex oederi*. *C. oederi* has smaller perigynia, $\frac{1}{16}$ to $\frac{1}{8}$ inch long versus $\frac{1}{8}$ to $\frac{1}{4}$ inch long for *C. flava*. *C. oederi* has narrower, channeled leaves, $\frac{1}{16}$ to $\frac{1}{8}$ inch wide versus wider, flatter leaves $\frac{1}{16}$ to $\frac{1}{4}$ inch wide for *C. flava*, which then appears leafier than *C. oederi*.

Phenology: Identifiable July and August.

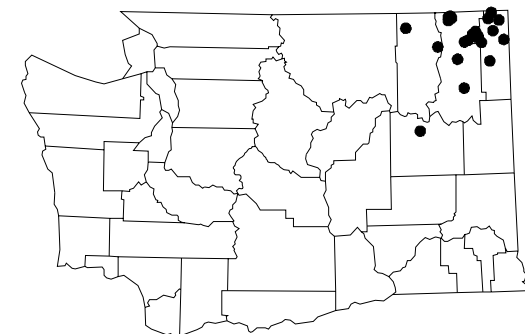
Range: Circumboreal; southern British Columbia to Newfoundland, south to New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Indiana, and Montana. In Washington, the species is found in Stevens, Ferry, and Pend Oreille counties in the Okanogan Highlands physiographic province.

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Known distribution of
Carex flava in
Washington



● Current (1980+)
○ Historic (older than 1980)

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Photo by Barb Benner - USFS



Photo by
Robert Moseley - IDCDC

2000 Produced as part of a cooperative project between the Washington Department of Natural Resources, Washington Natural Heritage Program, and the U.S.D.I. Bureau of Land Management. Persons needing this information in an alternate format may call (360)902-1340 or TTY (360)902-1125.

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Habitat: Wet meadows, forested wetlands, bogs and shores of streams and lakes. Associated species, at one or more sites in Washington, include *Sphagnum* sp., *Carex utriculata*, *C. lenticularis*, *C. aurea*, *C. aenea*, *Eriophorum* sp., *Equisetum arvense*, *Scirpus* sp., *Juncus ensifolius*, *Potentilla palustris*, *Mentha arvensis*, *Geum rivale*, and *Geum macrophyllum*. Elevation ranges from 2000 to 4300 feet.

Ecology: *Carex flava* is an obligate wetland species (USFWS 1988). Seeds, after being released, remain dormant in the soil for one to several winters. After a period of low-temperature enforced dormancy, the seeds may or may not germinate the following year. Seeds from different plants or even the same plant may require different conditions for germination (Schmid 1984). This strategy may insure the long-term survival of this taxon at a favorable site.

State Status Comments: There are only 23 known occurrences in Washington.

Inventory Needs: Additional inventory is needed in appropriate habitats throughout Washington.

Threats and Management Concerns: Threats to the taxon include grazing, timber harvesting, and changes in hydrology.

References:

Hitchcock, C. L., A. Cronquist, M. Ownbey, and J.W. Thompson. 1969. *Vascular Plants of the Pacific Northwest, Part 1: Vascular Cryptogams, Gymnosperms, and Monocotyledons*. University of Washington Press, Seattle. 914 pp.

Schmid, B. 1984. Life histories in clonal plants of the *Carex flava* Group. *Journal of Ecology* 72: 93-114.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. 1988. National list of vascular plant species that occur in wetlands. USFWS Biological Report 88 (24).

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